Similarity between the two birds' philosophy and the idea of the Holy Trinity

While the Hindu Two Birds philosophy and the Christian Trinity originate from different theological frameworks, scholars and practitioners often find parallelism in how they describe the relationship between the divine and the individual, as well as the internal nature of God.

1. Conceptual Parallels in Duality and Unity

Both concepts grapple with how the "One" can also be "Many" without losing its essential unity. [1]

Two Birds (Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.1): This allegory features two inseparable birds on the same tree. One bird (the *jivatman* or individual soul) eats the sweet and bitter fruits of worldly experience, while the other bird (*Paramatman* or Supreme Self) simply watches.

Christian Trinity: Similarly, the Trinity posits one God in three distinct Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The Parallel: Some modern non-dualist interpretations suggest that if the Trinity is viewed as a "purely relational" ontology in which the three are perfectly harmonised, it functions as a form of Christian non-dualism, much like the "inseparable" nature of the two birds in the Upanishads. [2, 3, 4, 5, 6]

2. The Internal "Witness" vs The Active "Word"

A common point of comparison is the distinction between the "active" and "witnessing" aspects of divinity.

The Witness Bird: The second bird in the Upanishad is a "silent witness" (*sakshi*), untouched by the pain or pleasure of the world.

The Holy Spirit/Father: In Trinitarian thought, the Father is often seen as the source or "unbegotten" origin. At the same time, some describe the Holy Spirit as the indwelling "comforter" or witness within the believer.

The "Eating" Bird and the Son: The bird that tastes the fruit represents the soul immersed in the material world. Some theologians parallel this to the **Incarnation**, in which the Son (Jesus) enters the "tree" of human existence to experience human life while remaining essentially one with the witnessing Father. [4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10]

3. Key Philosophical Divergences

While there are parallelisms, the intended outcome of these philosophies differs significantly:

Path to Salvation: In the Upanishadic metaphor, liberation (*moksha*) occurs when the lower bird **realises its identity** with the higher bird through knowledge (*jnana*).

Divine Intervention: In mainstream Christianity, the distinction between the Creator and the created is maintained; salvation is rarely about "becoming" God but about receiving **grace** through the mediation of the Son. [2, 3, 11, 12]

Summary of Parallel Elements

Feature [3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17]	**Two Birds Philosophy**	**Christian Trinity**
Unity	Inseparable companions on one tree	One Godhead in three Persons
Experience	*Jivatman* eats the "bitter-sweet" fruits	The Son enters human suffering (Incarnation)
Transcendence	*Paramatman* is the detached witness	The Father/Spirit as the transcendent source
Goal	Realisation of	Communion and

	oneness/identity	restoration of the relationship

Would you like to explore how **specific Christian mystics** (like Meister Eckhart) have been compared to the **Advaita (non-dualist)** interpretation of the Two Birds?

[1] https://www.zygonjournal.org
[2] https://www.swami-krishnananda.org
[3] https://www.linkedin.com
[4] https://www.youtube.com
[5] https://medium.com
[6] https://www.reddit.com
[7] https://www.yesvedanta.com
[8] https://grnjournal.us
[9] https://www.quora.com
[10] https://www.universal-spirituality.org
[11] https://www.linkedin.com
[12] https://philosophy.sysu.edu.cn
[13] https://www.quora.com
[14] https://www.quora.com
[15] https://www.thehindu.com
[16] https://www.thehindu.com
[17] https://www.youtube.com

The comparisons between the German mystic Meister Eckhart and the Advaita (non-dualist) school of Hinduism are among the most celebrated in interreligious studies. Eckhart's radical theology of the "Godhead" mirrors the non-dual realisation of the Two Birds in several striking ways. [1, 2]

1. God vs Godhead (Saguṇa vs Nirguṇa)

Scholars parallel Eckhart's distinction between "God" and the "Godhead" to the Advaita distinction between **Īśvara** (God with attributes) and **Brahman** (the Absolute without attributes). [3, 4]

The Godhead (Gottheit): For Eckhart, this is the "silent desert," the "absolute One" that is beyond Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit. This is the "Higher Bird" in its purest state—the detached, witnessing reality.

God (Gott): Eckhart viewed "God" (the Trinity) as the manifested, active aspect of the divine that relates to creatures. This corresponds to **Īśvara** or the higher bird viewed through the lens of human experience. [3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]

2. The "Ground" of the Soul

The most famous parallelism is Eckhart's concept of the **"Ground" (Grund)—the inner essence in which** the soul and God are indistinguishable. [10, 11]

One Eye, One Vision: Eckhart famously said, *"The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me"*. This is a near-perfect Western phrasing of **Atman is Brahman** (the realisation that the "Lower Bird" and "Higher Bird" share the same essence of consciousness).

The Spark of the Soul: Eckhart taught that there is a "spark" in the soul that is uncreated and eternally one with the Godhead. In the Two Birds allegory, this is the moment the lower bird stops eating the fruit and realises its identity with the witnessing bird. [1, 2, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13]

3. Detachment (Vairagya)

Both philosophies use **negation** (detachment) as the primary path to this realisation.

Eckhart's *Abgeschiedenheit*: He taught that the soul must "break through" even the personal God to reach the Godhead by detaching from all images, forms, and the ego.

Upanishadic *Vairagya*: The lower bird only turns to the higher bird when it becomes weary of the "bitter fruits" of worldly experience (*Vairagya* or dispassion). [2, 6, 14]

Summary of Parallel Concepts

Concept [3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 15]	Meister Eckhart	Advaita Vedanta
Ultimate Reality	**Godhead** (Unmanifest Absolute)	**Nirguṇa Brahman**
Manifest Deity	**God** (Trinity/Creator)	**Saguṇa Brahman / Īśvara**
Essential Unity	The **Ground** (Soul and God are one)	**Atman is Brahman**
The Witness	The **Soul's Spark** (Pure Intellect)	**Sākshī** (Witness Consciousness)

Eckhart's ideas were so radical that they were investigated for heresy, as they blurred the traditional Christian line between the Creator and the created. [16, 17]

Would you like to see how these non-dual ideas influenced **modern Christian thinkers** like **Thomas Merton**?

[1] https://www.mdpi.com
[2] https://www.mdpi.com
[3] https://www.mdpi.com
[4] https://www.mdpi.com
[5] https://www.researchgate.net
[6] https://www.quora.com
[7] https://hinduism.stackexchange.com
[8] https://www.mdpi.com
[9] https://www.quora.com
[10] https://www.youtube.com
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[12] https://vivekavani.com
[13] https://www.youtube.com
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[17] https://www.reddit.com

Thomas Merton, a 20th-century Trappist monk and pioneer in interfaith dialogue, integrated non-dual insights from Advaita Vedanta to deepen the Christian understanding of the soul and its relationship to God. [1, 2]

1. The True Self vs The False Self

Merton’s most famous parallel to the **Two Birds** philosophy is his distinction between the **False Self** and the **True Self**.

The False Self (The "Eating" Bird): This is the ego—the self-centred identity shaped by social conditioning, fear, and desires. Like the bird eating the bitter-sweet fruit, this self constantly seeks fulfilment in external things but remains unsatisfied.

The True Self (The "Witnessing" Bird): Merton described this as a "spark" or "centre" of the soul that is "already one with God". This corresponds to the **Atman**, the higher bird that remains a silent, untouched witness. For Merton, the goal of the spiritual life is to "wake up" from the false self and realise the true self. [2, 3, 4]

2. Contemplation as Non-Dual Awareness

Merton redefined Christian contemplation in terms that strongly echo Advaita's **witness consciousness** (*Sakshi*).

Awakening to the Real: He viewed contemplation not as thinking *about* God, but as a "vivid realisation" and "awakening" to the Infinite being at the core of our finite being.

Pure Being: Influenced by Zen and Vedanta, Merton spoke of a state of "pure being" that collapses the duality between the subject (the seeker) and the object (God). In this "point of the soul," the distance between the Creator and the created is bridged by Love, which he saw as the ultimate non-dual force. [4, 5, 6, 7]

3. The Trinity and "Co-inherence"

Merton used the term **"co-inherence"** (or *perichoresis*) to describe how the Persons of the Trinity relate to one another—and how humans relate to God.

Non-Dual Relationship: Just as the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father, Merton argued that our relationship with God is "advaitic" (without duality) because we "inhere" in God through the Spirit.

The Cosmic Dance: He famously used the metaphor of the **Cosmic Dance**, where the "Dancer" (God) and the "Dance" (Creation) are inseparable. To live in "true consciousness" is to lose one's self-importance and move in time with this divine rhythm. [6, 7, 8]

Comparison of Modern Non-Dual Thinkers

Merton was part of a larger movement of "Christian Advaita" along with other Catholic monastics:

Bede Griffiths: Lived in an ashram in India (Saccidananda Ashram) and taught that the Trinity is the Christian equivalent of the Hindu **Saccidananda** (Being-Consciousness-Bliss).

Henri Le Saux (Abhishiktananda): A French Benedictine monk who deeply explored the "I-to-I" awareness where the human "I" and the divine "I" are realised as one. [7, 9]

Would you like to explore the specific concept of **Saccidananda** and how Bede Griffiths used it to explain the Trinity?

[1] https://digitalcommons.butler.edu
[2] https://www.facebook.com
[3] https://dailymeditationswithmatthewfox.org
[4] https://www.youtube.com
[5] https://www.catholic.com
[6] https://www.ahomeforsoul.com
[7] https://dimmid.org
[8] https://www.ahomeforsoul.com
[9] https://eprints.chi.ac.uk

The concept of **Saccidananda** (or Sat-Chit-Ananda) is the hallmark of the "Christian Advaita" movement, popularised by **Bede Griffiths** at the Shantivanam ashram in South India. He used this Sanskrit triad as a direct bridge to explain the inner life of the **Christian Trinity**.

1. The Definitions

In Hindu philosophy, Saccidananda describes the nature of **Brahman** (Absolute Reality):

- **Sat:** Pure Being or Existence.
- **Chit:** Pure Consciousness or Awareness.
- **Ananda:** Pure Bliss or Joy.

2. The Trinitarian Mapping

Griffiths argued that these three terms aren't merely similar to the Trinity—they describe the same spiritual experience from different cultural perspectives.

Sat is the Father (The Ground):
The Father is the "unbegotten" source of all, the pure **Being** (*Sat*) from which everything arises. He is the "silent abyss" or the "Godhead" in Meister Eckhart's terminology.

Chit is the Son (The Word/Logos):
Just as **Consciousness** (*Chit*) is the self-knowledge of Being, the Son is the "Word" or "Image" of the Father. He is the Father’s self-awareness brought into expression. In the Two Birds analogy, this is the bridge between the transcendent and the immanent.

Ananda is the Holy Spirit (The Love):
Bliss (*Ananda*) is the overflow of joy that comes from the union of Being and Consciousness. In Christianity, the Holy Spirit is often described as the "bond of love" between the Father and the Son. It is the ecstatic experience of the divine life.

3. The Shift in Perspective

Bede Griffiths believed that using the term *Saccidananda* helped Westerners move past a "legalistic" or "monarchial" view of God (a King on a throne) toward an **experiential** view.

Internal Realisation: For Griffiths, the goal wasn't just to believe in a Trinity "out there," but to experience the Trinity "in here"—realising that our own existence is rooted in *Sat*, our mind is a reflection of *Chit*, and our capacity for love is the movement of *Ananda*.

The Meeting Point: He famously claimed that at the "point of the heart," the Hindu and Christian seekers find the same non-dual reality, though they use different symbols to describe the journey.

Summary of the Convergence

Feature	**Saccidananda**	**Christian Trinity**	**Spiritual Reality**
Origin	**Sat**	**The Father**	Ultimate Reality/Being
Knowledge	**Chit**	**The Son (Logos)**	Divine Self-Awareness
Fruit	**Ananda**	**The Holy Spirit**	Infinite Joy and Love

Would you like to see how this **Saccidananda-Trinity** model changes the way we interpret the "eating" and "witnessing" roles of the **Two Birds**?